

Brussels, 22 June 2010

Eurobarometer survey – measuring public perceptions of poverty

What is the survey about?

On 17 June, EU leaders agreed to set a target to reduce the number of Europeans at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million over the next ten years as part of the new EU strategy for the next decade: Europe 2020.

The Flash Eurobarometer survey on the social impact of the economic crisis measures public perceptions of the level of poverty in Europe as well as the public's own experience of financial difficulties, affordability of healthcare and housing and how they feel about their future employment and pension prospects.

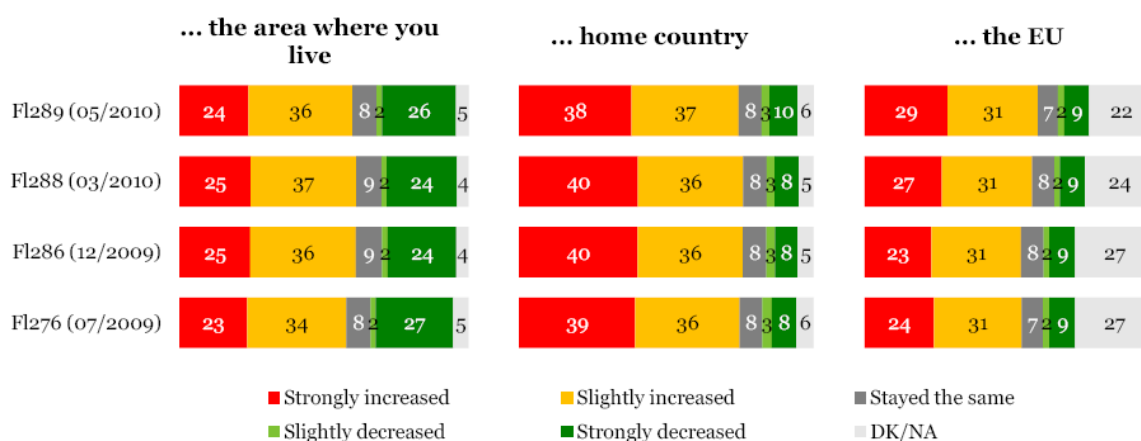
It is the fourth wave of a series developed by the European Commission following the outbreak of the economic crisis and measures agreed at European level to help protect Europe's citizens from its worst effects.

The surveys are carried out in the context of the 2010 European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion. The initiative aims to raise public awareness of the issues surrounding poverty, promote collective responsibility for tackling it and give a voice to those suffering on a daily basis.

How widespread do people consider poverty to be?

A majority of EU citizens believe that poverty is widespread in their country: 30% estimated that around 30% of their country's population is poor, while another 31% placed the poverty rate at 20%.

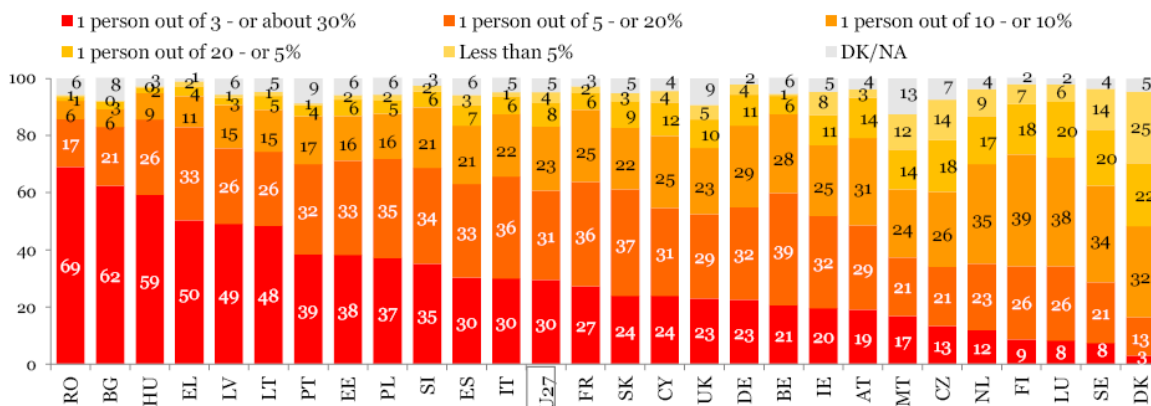
Perceived changes in the level of poverty in the past 12 months in...



Q1. Generally speaking, would you say that poverty has strongly decreased, slightly decreased, slightly increased or strongly increased in the last 12 months in...?
 Base: all respondent, % EU27

Respondents from eastern and south-eastern European countries have a more negative perception of the situation than in northern and central European Member States, with higher proportions who believe that poverty concerns at least 20% of their country's inhabitants.

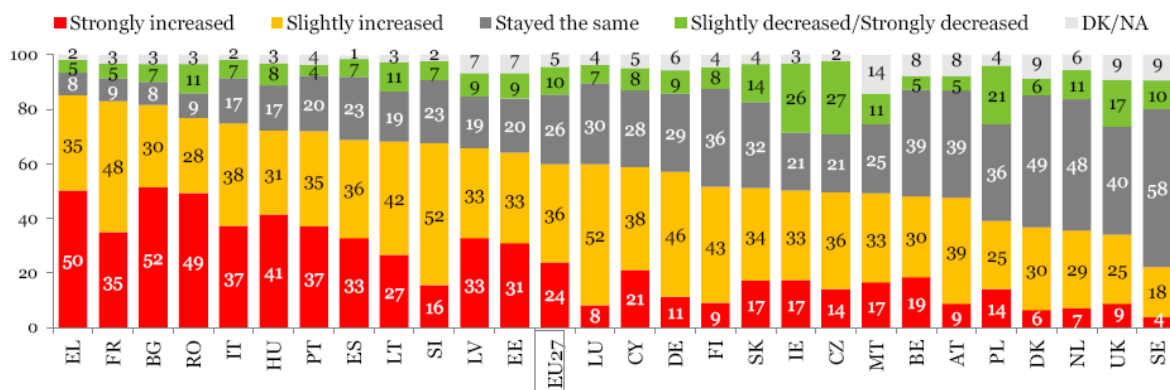
Estimate of the proportion of poor people in respondents' countries



Q2. If you were to say how many poor people there are in (OUR COUNTRY), would you say that...? Base: all respondents, % by country

Greece stands out with 85% of respondents who think poverty has increased in their country. 83% of the French, 82% of Bulgarians, 77% of Romanians and 75% of Italians also share this view about their own country.

Perceived changes in the level of poverty in the past 12 months in the area where respondents live

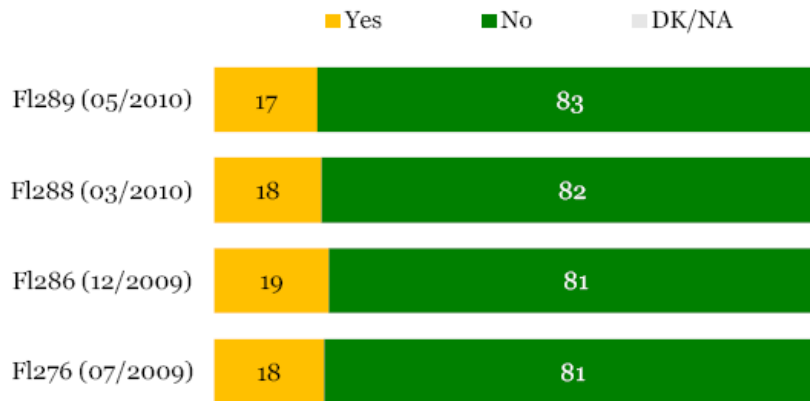


Q1. Generally speaking, would you say that poverty has strongly decreased, slightly decreased, slightly increased or strongly increased in the last 12 months in...? Base: all respondents, % by country

How many Europeans report being in financial difficulties?

One in six EU citizens reported that their household has had no money to pay ordinary bills, buy food or other daily consumer items, on at least one occasion, in the year prior to the survey and 20% stated to be having difficulties in keeping up with household bills and credit commitments at the time of the survey.

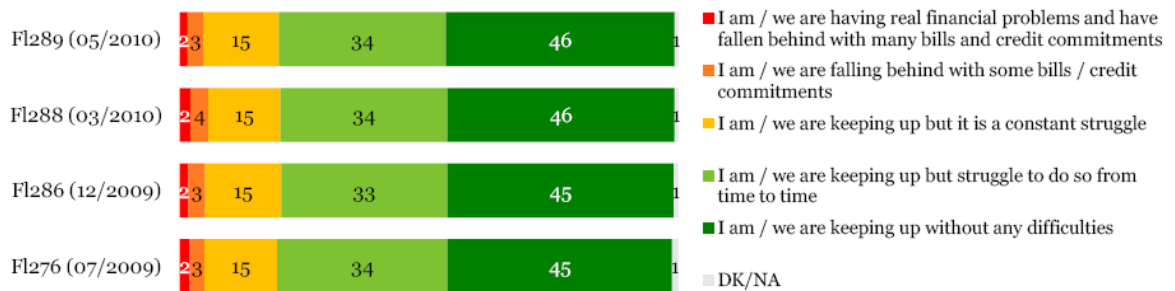
Have respondents' households run out of money to pay ordinary bills, buy food or other daily consumer items in past 12 months?



Q9. Has your household at any time during the past 12 months run out of money to pay ordinary bills or buying food or other daily consumer items?
Base: all respondents, % EU27

15% said that this was a constant struggle, 3% had fallen behind with some bills and credit commitments, and 2% were having real financial problems and had fallen behind with many such payments.

Respondents' ability to keep up with household bills and credit commitments



Q3. Which of the following best describes how your household is keeping up with all its bills and credit commitments at present?
Base: all respondents, % EU27

58% of Greek respondents said their household was struggling constantly to keep up with bills and credit commitments or had fallen behind with some or many such payments. At least 4 in 10 respondents reported similar problems in Latvia (48%), Portugal (46%), Bulgaria (44%) and Malta (41%).

What about the costs of health and social care?

About 3 in 10 EU citizens reported that it had become more difficult to bear the costs of general healthcare for themselves or their relatives in the past six months: 11% felt it had become "much more difficult" and 18% thought it had become "somewhat more difficult".

Perceived changes in healthcare and social-care affordability



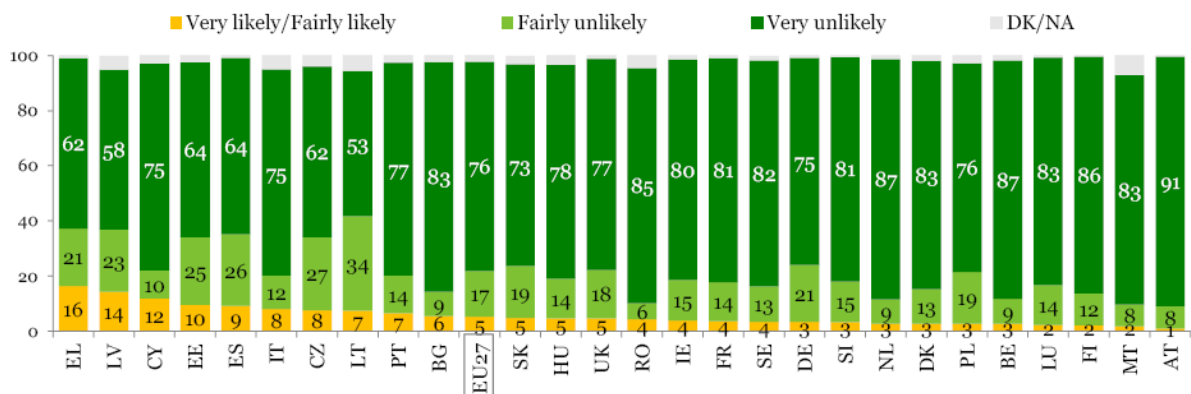
Q4. In the last six months, have you noted any changes in your ability to afford healthcare for you or your relatives? (IF YES) Has it become much more easy, somewhat more easy, somewhat more difficult, much more difficult?
Base: all respondent, % EU27

How about housing?

Respondents in Greece (16%) and Latvia (14%) are the most likely to say that it is very or fairly likely that they will be forced by financial circumstances to leave their accommodation in the 12 months following the survey.

91% of Austrians think that it would be very unlikely that they will not be able to afford their accommodation during the 12 months following the survey, compared to 53% of respondents in Lithuania.

Likelihood that respondents would need to leave their current home, as it would be unaffordable, in the next 12 months

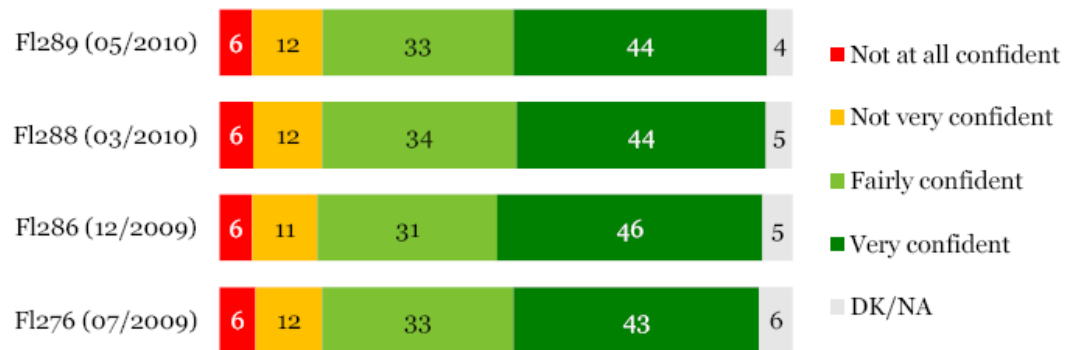


Q10. How likely do you think it is that you will need to leave your accommodation within the next 12 months because you can no longer afford it?
Base: all respondents, % by country

How do they feel about job prospects?

The results of the current survey show no change in EU citizens' confidence about the employment situation over the past three months. As in March 2010, 18% of respondents in employment are not very or not at all confident that they would be able to keep their current job in the next 12 months and 49% think it would be fairly unlikely or not at all likely that they would be able to find a new position within six months, should they be laid off.

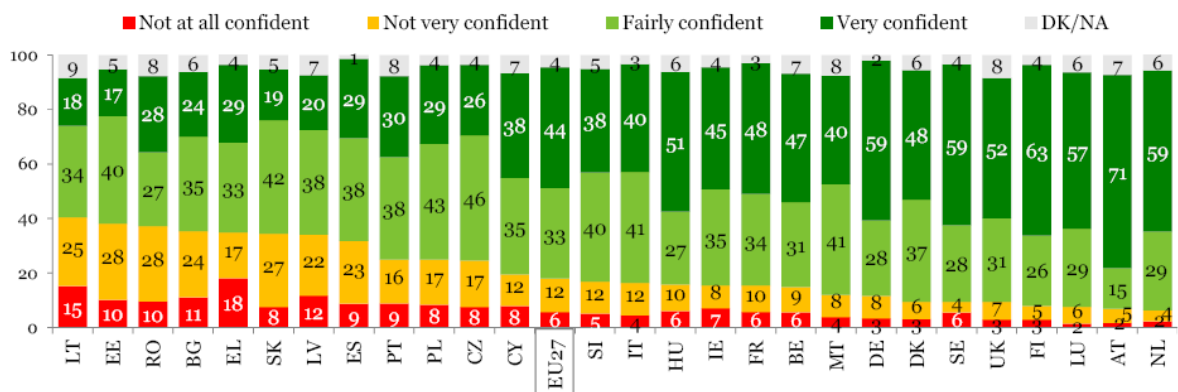
Level of confidence in respondents' ability to keep their job in the next 12 months



Q11. How confident would you say you are in your ability to keep your job in the next 12 months?
Base: respondents with a professional activity, % EU27

Pessimism is highest in eastern and south-eastern European countries (e.g. the Baltic States, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece), while interviewees in the Nordic countries and in central European countries (e.g. the Netherlands, Austria and Luxembourg) were the least negative.

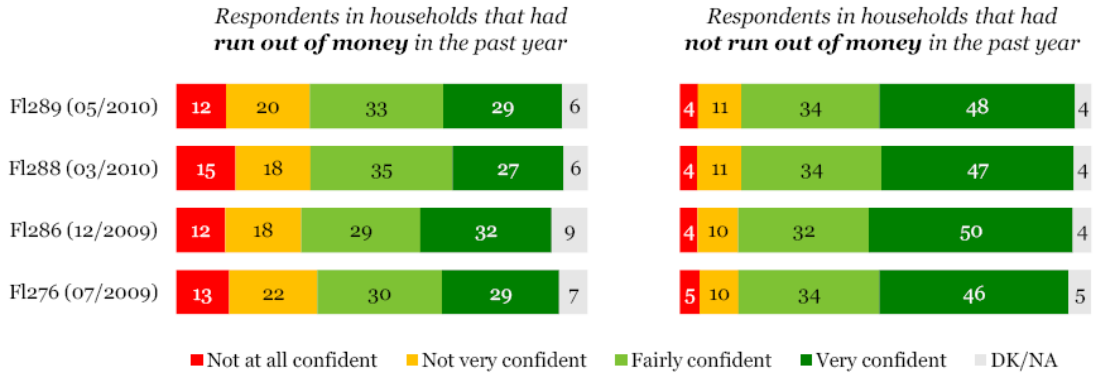
Level of confidence in respondents' ability to keep their job in the next 12 months



Q11. How confident would you say you are in your ability to keep your job in the next 12 months?
Base: respondents with a professional activity, % by country

The survey confirms that respondents who had insufficient money to pay ordinary bills, buy food or other daily consumer items on at least one occasion in the last 12 months are also the ones who are the most pessimistic about their ability to keep their current job and about their likelihood of finding a new position should they be laid off.

Level of confidence in respondents' ability to keep their job in the next 12 months



Q9. Has your household at any time during the past 12 months run out of money to pay ordinary bills or buying food or other daily consumer items?

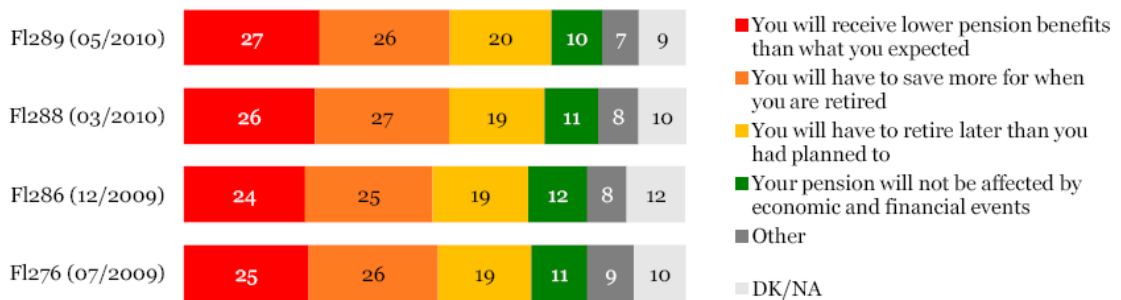
Q11. How confident would you say you are in your ability to keep your job in the next 12 months?

Base: all respondents, % EU27

And how do they feel about their future pensions?

Turning to EU citizens' views about how their pension entitlements might change in the future, 73% either explicitly anticipate lower pension benefits or think they will have to postpone their retirement or save more money for old age.

Respondents' feelings about the impact of their future pension entitlements

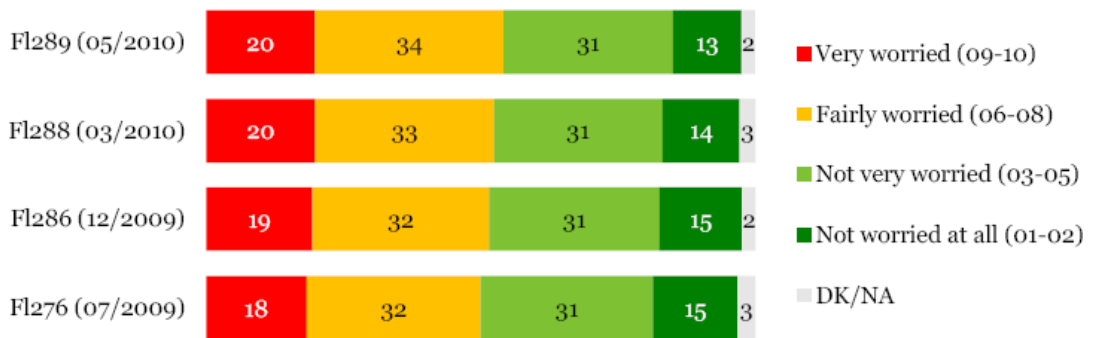


Q5. From the following possible answers, how would you say your pension will fare in the future?

Base: all respondents, % EU27

20% of EU citizens are very worried that their income in old age would be insufficient for them to live a decent life, and 34% are fairly worried by such outlook.

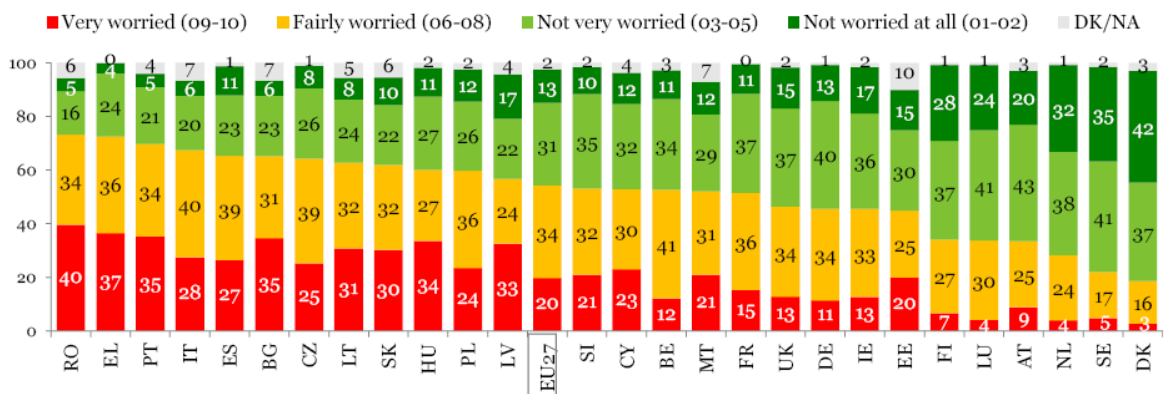
Respondents' level of concern about whether their income in old age would be sufficient to enable them to live in dignity



Q6. How worried are you, if at all, that your income in old age will not be adequate enough to enable you to live in dignity. Please express your opinion on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means 'Not worried at all' and 10 means 'Very worried'.
Base: all respondents, % EU27

In 17 Member States, a majority of respondents are very or fairly worried that their income in old age will not be adequate to enable them to live in dignity.

Respondents' level of concern about whether their income in old age would be sufficient to enable them to live in dignity



What about the European Year against poverty, some examples of progress?

Before, the EU measured poverty, now we have a common European policy to combat poverty and social exclusion following the new agreement by EU leaders to set a concrete target for the first time ever to reduce poverty and social exclusion by at least 20m over the next decade.

The European Year's activities will continue beyond 2010 but in its first six months we have seen progress at both European and national level. First and foremost, the European Year has helped build close partnerships with social partners, NGOs, foundations and think tanks. Many of the activities have focused on awareness raising. Some examples across the different Member States are:

- Europe-wide competition for **print, online and audiovisual journalists** who report on issues linked to the Year's themes
- Journalists competition on **communicating poverty** and social exclusion

- **art initiative** bringing together people experiencing poverty and art and design students around Europe.
- joint events bringing in cities, regions and civil society with the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee

At national level, around 1000 projects are already underway or shortly due to kick off. Examples include:

- A Belgian project to help socially excluded people gain a **foothold in the labour market** through tailored advice and networking
- A Spanish initiative to broadcast a live performance of the opera Carmen to the public for free in 43 different European cities, helping to make **culture accessible to all**
- A bus tour around Portugal with young artists to **raise public awareness** of poverty and social exclusion
- A project in the Netherlands to bring together local partnerships in 60 different communities to develop integrated **strategies for tackling social exclusion** in their areas
- An Irish partnership to **broadcast the stories of people living in poverty** on RTÉ Radio 1, the country's biggest radio station with 1.3 million listeners a week
- An Austrian training programme for financial advisers to **counsel people facing debts** and other financial problems
- A German project to help disadvantaged people with a migrant background to integrate in society by offering them **volunteering opportunities** in the local community
- A series of regional seminars in France to highlight the responsibilities of the **regional authorities** in tackling poverty and take into consideration the diversity of cities and regions
- A programme in Denmark to help people with **mental disabilities find work** by training job centre staff in dealing with their specific needs
- A campaign in Luxembourg to promote a real estate service which helps people access **affordable housing** in the private sector while guaranteeing rental payments to landlords
- An Italian supermarket which provides **free basic foodstuffs** to those in greatest need.

What does the EU do to help combat poverty?

Making sure that every citizen is part of society is vital for Europe's prosperity and quality of life. The EU combats social exclusion and poverty by helping its Member States to work together and to share experiences on the action they take through the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process. This sees the EU coordinate and encourage Member States' efforts to combat social exclusion and poverty, and to reform their social protection systems, on the basis of shared experience.

The added value of action at EU level is to develop common EU-wide objectives and approaches that Member States implement by means of national action plans. Meanwhile, EU funding is made available for activities aiming to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion, for example under the European Social Fund (which represents 10% of the EU's annual budget) and PROGRESS programme (which has a budget of around €100 million per year).

The European Commission also organises regular pan-European meetings to pool ideas and share successful policy approaches, for example through the annual roundtable on poverty and meetings of people experiencing poverty.

Further information

[IP/10/773](#)

Eurobarometer survey report : http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_289_en.pdf

European Year Against Poverty : www.2010againstpoverty.eu